

## *International Women's Day March 8*

# **March is National Women's History Month**

*by Tibisay Marin, staff writer  
Office of Communications*

International Women's Day has its roots in the labor movements of the late 19th and early 20th century, when workers protested poor working conditions and low wages in the textile industry, which employed many women. International Women's Day was first celebrated on March 8, 1911, and had "Universal Female Suffrage" as its theme.

In the 87 years since, women have gained the vote and much more - equality under the law and a more prominent place in all aspects of society. International Women's Day celebrates these achievements and looks ahead to continued progress for women on all fronts. In 1998, the theme is built around "The Evolution of Women's Rights: A Lifelong Commitment."

In 1977, the United Nations officially called on all countries to set aside a day to recognize women's advancements. International Women's Day is now celebrated throughout the world. Its symbols, bread and roses, adopted from the labor movement at the turn of the century, are to represent the struggle for economic equality (bread) and to represent continuing efforts for a better quality of life (roses).

## **Women Change America: Historic Moments**

**1777-** Mary Katherine Goddard prints the first copy of the Declaration of Independence to include the names of the signers.

**1848- 300** women and men meet to discuss women's rights at Seneca Falls, New York.

**1851-** Harriet Tubman becomes a conductor on the Underground Railroad and returns to the South 19 times rescuing more than 300 people.

**1852-** Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin is officially published, selling 300,000 copies the first year and awakening white northerners to the plight of enslaved black people.

**1872-** Susan B. Anthony and other suffragists are arrested for voting in the Presidential Election.

**1910-** Dr. Alice Hamilton connects contaminated and unsafe working conditions to illness and death, leading to the first worker's safety laws.

**1919-** Suffragists picketing the White House are arrested. They go on a hunger strike and are force-fed. News of their brutal treatment outrages the nation.

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**1920-** After a 72-year campaign, women in the United States win the right to vote.

**1939-** Marian Anderson gives an Easter Sunday Concert at the Lincoln Memorial drawing an audience of 75,000 and transforming the nation.

**1950-** Margaret Chase Smith challenges the tactics of Senator Joseph McCarthy on the floor of the United States Senate.

**1955-** Rosa Parks is arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus, resulting in the year long Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott which effectively challenged long held segregation policies of the South.

**1962-** Rachel Carson's Silent Spring is published launching the Environmental Movement

**1971-** Katherine Graham, publisher of the Washington Post, printed the Pentagon Papers which disclosed the lies and cover-up of the Vietnam War.

**1972-** Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972 is passed to guarantee equal access and educational opportunity in all public education institutions to males and females.

**1973-** Billie Jean King defeats Bobby Riggs on the tennis court in the Battle of the Sexes.

**1988-** Gertrude Elion shares the Nobel Prize in Medicine for her pioneering work in inventing drugs to treat acute leukemia, kidney disease, and arthritis.

**2004** In the spirit of Babe Didrikson, the USA Women's Basketball, Soccer, Softball, and Volleyball teams all win Gold Medals at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Greece.

## **Women Inventors**

On May 15 1809, **Mary Dixon Kies** received the first U.S. patent issued to a woman. Kies, a Connecticut native, invented a process for weaving straw with silk or thread. First Lady, Dolley Madison praised her for boosting the nation's hat industry. Unfortunately, the patent file was destroyed in the great Patent Office fire in 1836. Until about 1840, only 20 other patents were issued to women. The inventions related to apparel, tools, cook stoves, and fire places.

In 1845, **Sarah Mather** received a patent for the invention of a submarine telescope and lamp. This was a remarkable device that permitted sea-going vessels to survey the depths of the ocean.

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**Martha J. Coston** perfected then patented her deceased husband's idea for a pyrotechnic flare. Coston's husband, a former naval scientist, died leaving behind only a rough sketch in a diary of plans for the flares. Martha developed the idea into an elaborate system of flares called Night Signals that allowed ships to communicate messages nocturnally. The U. S. Navy bought the patent rights to the flares. Coston's flares served as the basis of a system of communication that helped to save lives and to win battles. Martha credited her late husband with the first patent for the flares, but in 1871 she received a patent for an improvement exclusively her own.

**Margaret Knight - Queen of Paper Bags** was born in 1838. She received her first patent at the age of 30, but inventing was always part of her life. Margaret or 'Mattie' as she was called in her childhood, made sleds and kites for her brothers while growing up in Maine. When she was just 12 years old, she had an idea for a stop-motion device that could be used in textile mills to shut down machinery, preventing workers from being injured. Knight eventually received some 26 patents. Her machine that made flat-bottomed paper bags is still used to this very day!

**Julie Newmar**, a living Hollywood film and television legend, is a women inventor. The former Catwoman patented ultra-sheer, ultra-snug pantyhose. Known for her work in films such as Seven Brides for Seven Brothers and Slaves of Babylon, Newmar has also appeared recently in Fox Television's Melrose Place and the hit feature-film *To Wong Fu, Thanks for Everything, Love Julie Newmar*.

### **Katherine Blodgett 1898 - 1979 invented non-reflective glass.**

Katherine Blodgett was a woman of many firsts. She was the first female scientist hired by General Electric's Research Laboratory in Schenectady, New York (1917) as well as the first woman to earn a Ph.D. in Physics from Cambridge University (1926). She was the first woman to receive the Photographic Society of America Award and the American Chemical Society honored her with the Francis P. Garvin Medal.

Blodgett's research on monomolecular coatings with Nobel Prize winning Irving Langmuir (1881-1957) led her to a revolutionary discovery. She discovered a way to apply the coatings layer-by-layer to glass and metal. The thin films, which naturally reduced glare on reflective surfaces, when layered to a certain thickness, would completely cancel out the reflection from the surface underneath. This resulted in the world's first 100 percent transparent or invisible glass. Blodgett's patented film and process (1938) has been used for many purposes including limiting distortion in eyeglasses, microscopes, telescopes, cameras and projector lenses.

Blodgett received U.S. patent #2,220,660 on March 16, 1938 for the "Film Structure and Method of Preparation" or invisible, non-reflective glass. She also invented a special color gauge for measuring the thickness of these films of glass, as 35,000 layers of film only added up to the thickness of a sheet of paper.

*Editor's Note: Information for this story was researched from <http://www.about.com/> and <http://www.nwhp.org/>.*

### **More Resources about Women:**

- ◆ **Quotations by Women**  
<http://womenshistory.about.com/library/qu/blqulist.htm>
- ◆ **Birthdates of notable women, key events in women's history and a quotation for each day (JUST CLICK ON THE CALENDAR FOR MORE INFORMATION ON EACH DAY)**  
<http://womenshistory.about.com/library/cal/bl00.htm>
- ◆ **All about inventors and inventions**  
[http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blkidprimer6\\_12w2.htm](http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blkidprimer6_12w2.htm)